

ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT AT SCHOOL: POLICY AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

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1. INTRODUCTION

West Lothian Council is committed to working with parents, children and other stakeholders to ensure that, wherever possible, all children enrolled at its schools receive an education that maximises the opportunity for every child to achieve their full potential.

Staff in schools, the Authority and in school support services will work with pupils and families to ensure that each pupil attends regularly and punctually.

Good attendance and engagement are linked to higher levels of participation, attainment and ultimately future opportunities. The impact of non-attendance and non-engagement significantly increases gaps in knowledge and understanding and the likelihood of young people leaving school without securing a positive destination. For some, life presents particular challenges which may impact negatively on attendance and engagement. Attendance at school therefore requires to be approached within the wider Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, considering the holistic needs of the child/young person.

When assessment, planning and action are needed to support a child or young person's attendance, the GIRFEC National Practice Model is used to provide a framework for structuring and analysing the child or young person's needs in the same way as for any other additional support need. Using the National Practice Model in a consistent way allows practitioners to construct, implement and review plans for children and young people to ensure the appropriate supports are in place.

Given the centrality of attendance at school to other areas of strategic and operational activity within the council, it is necessary also to consider this aspect of educational provision in conjunction with policy and procedure in relation to Corporate Parenting responsibilities, Children Missing from Education, the development of Positive Relationships, Transition Planning and rights of families to Home Educate children and young people.

Child Protection is of paramount importance and non-attendance at school may indicate a child is at risk. In this situation Child Protection takes precedence over the Attendance Policy and Child Protection Procedures must be followed.

Education Authorities are under a duty in relation to pupils unable to attend a suitable educational establishment as a result of their prolonged ill-health. In such circumstances, schools must make special arrangements for the pupil to receive appropriate education.

Throughout this document the term parent(s) will be used to apply to anyone with parental responsibility, those providing a foster or residential placement, or the local authority where full parental responsibility rests with them. In the case of care experienced children and young people and those in kinship care, this is also taken to mean 'carer'.

2. AIM

The aim of this policy and related procedures is to:

- improve overall attendance and punctuality of all pupils at school through taking a holistic, long-term view;
- make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with schools including parents, children, teachers, and support staff and partner agencies enabling all our children to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors;
- ensure consistency in dealing with all issues of attendance and absence; and
- ensure the accurate recording of pupils' attendance and absence in accordance with Scottish Government guidance.

3. DEFINITION OF ATTENDANCE

Attendance is defined as participation in a programme of educational activities which includes:

- attendance at school;
- learning outwith the school provided by a college, or other learning provider while still on the roll of the school;
- educational visits, day and residential visits to outdoor centres;
- interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events;
- debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with the school;
- study leave for pupils participating in national exams, if arranged by the school during the period of the national examination timetable;
- activities in connection with psychological services, learning or wellbeing support (including attendance at the Authority Attendance Group);
- receiving tuition via hospital or outreach teaching services;
- work placements.

Attendance at school is important to enable children and young people to fulfil their potential and for them to have the best possible start in life.

Below are just some of the key reasons why it is so important children and young people attend school:

- To learn
- To have fun and make friendships
- To understand responsibility
- To experience new things in life
- To develop awareness of other cultures, religions, ethnicity and gender difference
- To achieve qualifications
- To develop new skills
- To build self-esteem and confidence
- To grow as individuals.

4. INCLUDED, ENGAGED, INVOLVED PART 1 – A POSITIVE APPROACH TO THE PROMOTION AND MANAGEMENT OF ATTENDANCE IN SCOTTISH SCHOOLS

To underpin all activity across West Lothian schools to promote and support good attendance and engagement, West Lothian Council follows the Scottish Government Guidance set out in *Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools 2019*.

[Included, engaged and involved part 1: promoting and managing school attendance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

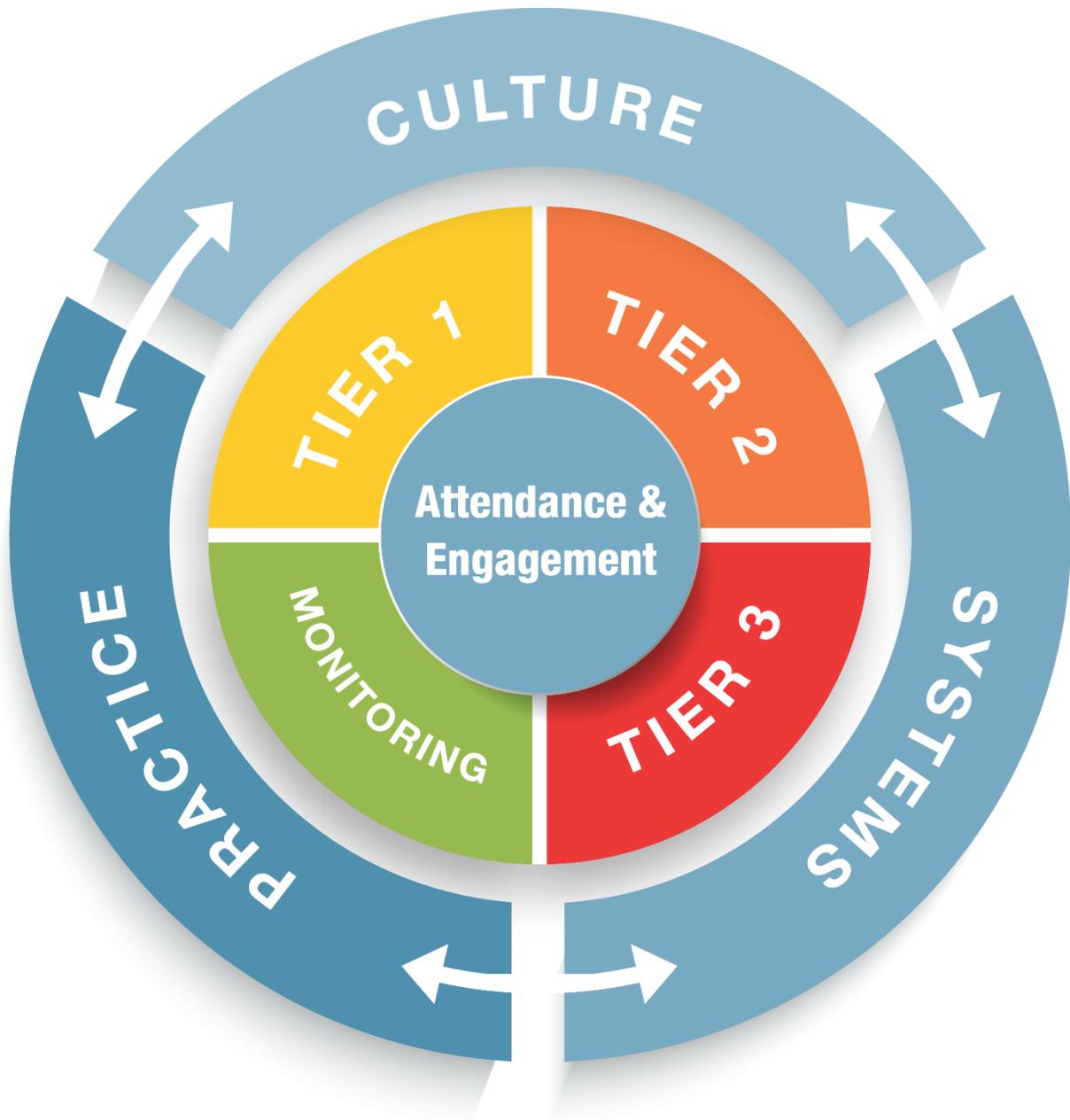
The national guidance provides clear information and support on the following key areas for West Lothian schools to support attendance and engagement of children and young people:

1. The Importance of Good Attendance
2. Promoting Good Attendance
3. Supporting Attendance and Managing Absence
4. Managing Authorised Attendance
5. Managing Unauthorised Attendance
6. Measures for Compulsory Compliance
7. Attendance and Absence Data Recording and Management

5. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

The West Lothian Approach

The West Lothian Approach to supporting learners to attend and be engaged in learning at school is set out on the following diagram.



The outer ring of the diagram relates to the universal culture, systems and practice required to support high levels of attendance and engagement of our children and young people. The inner ring of the diagram relates to the increasingly targeted responses required by the school and multi-agency partners to support good attendance and engagement.

5.1 Culture

Feelings of safety and belonging are key to supporting good attendance and engagement in school. In West Lothian, strong school cultures and feelings of safety and belonging are fundamental to school core values. Our teams focus on the holistic wellbeing needs of every child

and young person and seek to understand why any child/young person feels safe/unsafe at school, at home or in the community. Our teams also seek to understand if a child/young person feels safe leaving their home to come to school. The responsibility for the success of our inclusive and safe cultures across our schools is the responsibility of all team members across the school community and associated partners.

Research suggests that prolonged periods of absence from school can be deemed a public health issue. Children and young people who miss out on school through prolonged absence miss out on both key social and learning milestones and can be a factor in longer-term health, economic, social and relationship challenges into adulthood. Covid 19 has, and continues to have, an impact on our children, young people and their families and to ensure our learners have the best possible start in life, we collectively need to create the cultures where strong relationships thrive and where school is where all children and young people feel safe and supported to achieve their undoubted potential.

5.1.1 Leadership for wellbeing

A relentless leadership commitment to improving wellbeing leads to successes in supporting attendance. Collaborative work across staff teams, together with parents and partners leads to a shared understanding that positive wellbeing is linked to attendance and engagement.

5.1.2 Relationships

Compassionate, flexible relationships with significant adults are not dependent on role or remit – family members, school staff, CLD youth workers, third sector partners, community mentors, coaches and local employers can all make a difference to a child or young person's sense of belonging. The strength and nature of the relationship is most influential in improving attendance. Adults who show they care, listen and are respectful, create stronger and more positive connections over time which allows them to mentor the young person to improve wellbeing and attendance. Relationships are more important than ever as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and all schools require to have a renewed focus on the importance and power of positive relationships across the school and wider community.

5.1.3 Parents, partners and community

There is a strong connection between attendance and achievement. All schools are required to promote good attendance to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their potential. This can be achieved by raising the profile of attendance in school documents such as school handbooks, newsletters, press articles, websites and social media and by linking rewards systems with good attendance. It is good practice to highlight the benefits of good attendance to all concerned e.g. in assemblies, awarding certificates or prizes, reward programmes and annual/term-time events celebrating individual, group and whole class achievement. Study Support programmes and Breakfast Clubs can also be useful in encouraging attendance and, in some cases, have been targeted towards those with attendance difficulties.

An understanding of the benefit of attending school for the full term can be supported through the consistent delivery of relevant, challenging and motivational learning activities. Such educational activities require to be planned for, and implemented, throughout the term, including the school days immediately prior to holiday breaks.

Schools should aim to promote in parents' positive attitudes to attendance. This includes raising the awareness of parents to the effects on attainment and access to life chances if children do not attend school regularly, or are persistently late. In discussing attendance with parents, it is important to maintain a practical focus that recognises the challenges of parenting and modern family life.

Parents should be encouraged to motivate their child to attend school. Some parents may have particular concerns about their child attending school. In these circumstances positive and early communication between school and home is crucial to resolve matters promptly without adverse impact on attendance. Having a named contact within the school for parents to discuss pastoral care issues is important.

A welcoming school ethos will create an environment which avoids lateness developing into absence for the full day. Lateness should be dealt with respectfully and consideration given to any family difficulties. When the school becomes aware of any difficulties it should do what it can to help in partnership with other services.

Promotion of positive attitudes to attendance includes raising the awareness of pupils and parents to the effects of non-attendance on the achievement, attainment and wellbeing of children and young people in school. Effects can also be long term.

West Lothian Council is committed to working with its partner agencies to ensure that all children and young people receive an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential. It is recognised that non-attendance may be an indicator of a wide range of issues or difficulties a child or young person is experiencing. It is essential therefore that an early intervention multi-agency approach be considered when addressing attendance concerns.

Inclusion and Support Service

The Inclusion and Support Service (ISS) brings together existing teams from Education and Social Policy to support children, young people and families with additional support needs. The service includes the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service, who provide educational support from their Early Intervention and Secondary Teams for children and young people aged 0-18. The ISS also includes the following social policy teams: Mental Health and Wellbeing; Parenting Groupwork and Attendance Improvement Management Service. All the teams within the Inclusion and Support Service work is underpinned by the Getting It Right for Every Child approach as we work together to improve outcomes for the children and young people of West Lothian and their families. In taking a holistic view at meeting wellbeing needs, the Inclusion and Support Service work in partnership with schools to support children, young people and families. Direct contact with the Inclusion and Support Service is via the online referral form:

[Wellbeing Recovery Group Referral Form - West Lothian Public Protection Committee \(publicprotectionwestlothian.org.uk\)](http://publicprotectionwestlothian.org.uk)

Contact for advice, guidance and consultation can also be made via the Head Teacher (Education) and the Group Manager (Social Policy). The ISS is overseen by the Senior Manager for Children's Services with joint Head of Service responsibility between Education Services and Social Policy.

Wellbeing Recovery Group

The Wellbeing Recovery Group (WRG) is a multi-agency group of professionals that meet regularly to match the most appropriate services to children and young people who are referred to the ISS for additional support.

The group meets to discuss referrals to the service and matches the most appropriate support to those who have been referred.

The ISS is one of many services that are part of this holistic approach to meeting the needs of our children and families in West Lothian.

The Covid-19 lockdown has had a significant impact on many children and young people and although schools have enhanced the support available to them, some young people may need support that's not available directly through school. This group will review the referrals and develop the most suitable package of support to meet the needs of the child or young person.

Every school can access further support to improve attendance and engagement via the ISS. It is essential that good lines of communication are established and maintained between school and the ISS team. This is best facilitated through regular contact/scheduled meetings to ensure consistency in implementation of the council's Attendance Procedures. It is recognised that arrangements for such communication will be agreed at a local level.

Community Approach

Working in partnership with the local community also offers significant opportunity to support and develop an inclusive and positive culture. Taking a service design approach to develop local solutions with partners to support children and young people can have a very powerful positive impact. Following a partnership planning approach and through the use of case studies, brings together the local community to support our children and young people. Silo approaches to complex problem solving are proven to be ineffective and through adopting a system and community wide approach to improving outcomes for children and young people, collectively, challenging issues can be addressed. An approach that could be considered has been developed by the ISS and is now part of the service improvement methodology. Further details on this local community approach to improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people can be found on the Education Scotland National Improvement Hub. The ISS Partnership Planning Event format and approach can be found on the link below:

[Learning pathways: Senior Phase design | Practice exemplars | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/national-improvement-hub/learning-pathways/senior-phase-design-practice-exemplars)

Educational Psychology Service

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) have collated a range of resources for schools to support parents whose children are very reluctant to attend school. The EPS SharePoint site collates advice and guidance from across the UK to support schools to gain a greater insight into issues around school non-attendance. Further details can be accessed on the EPS SharePoint site link below:

<https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/sites/WestLothianCouncil/wleps/SitePages/FAQ's.aspx?CT=1653378379804&OR=OWA-NT&CID=ab424f94-3c5f-62bd-e657-bce005e237be>

SELF-EVALUATION TASK 1

How does the culture of your school currently support good attendance?

Use the details in the table below to evaluate your current approach to creating a culture of attendance in your school and consider next steps.

Aspect of Culture	Key Activity	Next Steps
Leadership for Wellbeing		
Relationships		
Parents, Partners and Community		

5.2 Systems

Systems alone do not ensure an improvement in attendance and engagement. However, good systems within a positive culture should result in the development of effective practices and supports that result in a positive impact and better outcomes for children and young people.

5.2.1 Tracking and monitoring

Rigorous tracking and monitoring is needed to generate attendance information which can provide underlying patterns and issues. Schools require to have clear systems in place to track and monitor attendance and time-keeping to enable a timely response to emerging negative habits and trends. Equally important is tracking and monitoring the reasons for absence and to challenge and raise expectations of what good attendance looks like. Early intervention can prevent negative habits and can also highlight unmet wellbeing needs quickly and enable support to be put in place.

5.2.2 Analysis of ‘actionable data’

There is significant value in supporting analysis of absence through considering a range of issues: school refusal, leaving school early, visits to pupil support/school office/medical room, pedagogical truancy, absent at points of transition, home sitting, staying in corridors during classes, weekly patterns or times where children/young people feel learning is of less value e.g. end of terms. Underlying reasons for absence (e.g. linked to life at home) must also be identified and understood.

5.2.3 Systems triggers and procedures

Every school day counts for a child or young person and to support excellent attendance it is important to look beyond attendance percentage levels and consider what the percentage levels mean in terms of missed opportunities for learning and personal development.

The table below sets out the reality behind the attendance percentage levels in terms of number of missed school days.

100 % Attendance	0 Days Missed
95% Attendance	9 Days Absence (1 Week and 4 Days of Missed Learning)
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence (3 Weeks and 4 Days of Missed Learning)
80% Attendance	36 Days Absence (7 Weeks and 3 Days of Missed Learning – Half a Term Absent)
75% Attendance	45 Days Absence (9 Weeks and 1 Day of Missed Learning – Almost a Full Term Absent)
50% Attendance	90 Days Absence (20 Weeks of Missed Learning – Half of the School Annual Session Absent)

It is important to challenge misconceptions about attendance at school percentages and to not correlate attendance percentages to assessment percentages. 90% attendance is a becoming a cause for concern whereas 90% in a class assessment is an indicator of academic success. Schools must look beyond the attendance percentage and outline what absence levels mean in terms of missed days and implications of learning and progress in interactions with children/young people and parents.

The West Lothian Approach adopts a tiered intervention approach to our response to children and young people school attendance levels and aligns with the West Lothian Continuum of Support:

Summary of Tiered Intervention Approach

Monitoring Tier	Child/Young person has missed less than 10% of school	Green
Tier 1	Child/Young person has missed between 10% and 20% of school	Yellow
Tier 2	Child/Young person has missed between 20% and 50% of school	Amber
Tier 3	Child/Young person has missed more than 50% of school	Red

5.2.4 Safe Arrivals: Dealing with Unexplained Absence on First Day of Absence

The primary aim is to ascertain a reason for absence where one has not already been established. On the first day of absence an initial assessment must be carried out to determine the reason for non-attendance. The following procedure must be adhered to:

- schools are required to inform parents of the need to contact the school as early as possible, and before 9.00 am on the first day of absence, if their child is going to be absent from school;
- when a pupil has been recorded as absent, and no prior notification has been given of the absence by the parent, the school shall attempt to contact the parent, using the GroupCall Messenger system, by 9.45 am (primary and ASN schools) or by 10.00 am (secondary schools) on the first day of absence;
- parents will be responsible for providing and updating emergency contact information and for providing and updating contact telephone numbers for use by the GroupCall system. Parents will be responsible for responding promptly to contact from the school;
- where a parent/emergency contact is informed of the unexplained absence of a child from school and acknowledges the notification from the school, the parent/emergency contact will be responsible for taking appropriate action in conjunction with the school; and
- in cases where the parent/emergency contact does not respond to the notification of absence and therefore there is still no explanation of absence, the Head Teacher will conduct a risk assessment by 10.00 am on the morning of the first day of absence.

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR FIRST DAY OF ABSENCE

The following process should be adhered to in order to establish the category of risk for the child/young person. There are 3 grades of risk:

High - The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child/young person is in danger through their own vulnerability or may be the victim of a serious crime

Medium - The risk posed is likely to place the child/young person in danger or they are a threat to themselves

Low - The apparent threat of danger to the child/young person is regarded as minimal.

On every occasion of first day absence without explanation, a risk grading requires to be undertaken. This applies even where the young person is a frequent absentee. The risk grading should never be regarded as fixed and there must be regular reviews throughout the day to ensure that the initial risk grading is still appropriate. The level of risk will be identified by answering the following questions in relation to vulnerability, influences and past behavior;

Vulnerability:

Is there an identified risk of suicide?

Is criminality suspected to be a factor? Is the child/young person vulnerable?

What are the effects of failure to take medication if it is unavailable to the child/young person?

Does the child/young person suffer from medical or mental health conditions, physical illnesses or disabilities?

Can the child/young person interact safely with others when finding themselves in unfamiliar circumstances?

Is there a known dependency on drugs, alcohol, medication or other substance either by the child/young person or by a close relative?

Is the child/young person on the Child Protection Register? Do the current weather conditions present an additional risk?

Influences:

Are there family/relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?

Has the child/young person been witness to or subject to domestic abuse?

Is there an ongoing personal issue linked to any racial, homophobic, sexual, the local community or cultural issue?

Has the child/young person been witness to, subject to or been involved in a recent violent and/or hate crime?

Are there any known problems in school?

Past Behaviour (Behaviour which is out of character is often a strong indicator of risk):

Are the circumstances different from 'normal' or out of character?

Is there a known reason for the child/young person to be not attending school?

Has the child/young person been missing before? Where were they found and did they come to harm?

The answers to the above questions enables the Head Teacher to decide whether the absent pupil should be categorised as High, Medium or Low Risk within the timescale stated above.

This decision will inform the most appropriate course of action. The options of next steps are either to:

- continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the day;
- where a child is known to have an allocated worker from Social Policy, inform the appropriate Social Policy team of the absence. The Social Policy team will then have the responsibility of contacting the family and establishing the whereabouts of the child/young person. In the event of the allocated worker being unavailable, their line manager or the Duty Social Work Manager will progress the matter;
- if child or young person has a sibling attending another school, contact the other school to inform the risk assessment;
- contact the Safe Arrival Duty Worker (email safearrivals@westlothian.gov.uk); or
- call Police Scotland. Police Scotland would expect to be notified at the earliest opportunity with regards to a missing child/young person following on from the Safe Arrivals procedure as outlined above. Schools should in all cases, not hesitate to make immediate contact with the police if additional factors/information giving cause for suspicion or concern becomes available. To report a missing person, contact should be made to Police Scotland on 101. In an emergency, contact by means of the 999 system.

An overview of procedural expectations when managing Safe Arrivals – Dealing with Unexplained Absences is detailed in Appendix 4 – Safe Arrivals Flowchart.

5.2.5 Safe Arrivals: Dealing with Unexplained Absence From Second Day of Absence Onwards

It is not appropriate procedure to contact the Safe Arrivals Duty Worker beyond the first day of absence. In the event of the outcome of the risk assessment on first day of absence being “to continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the day”, for each continued day of absence the risk assessment procedure requires to be undertaken as follows:

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT DAYS OF ABSENCE

The following process should be adhered to in order to establish the category of risk for the child/young person. There are 3 grades of risk:

High - The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child/young person is in danger through their own vulnerability or may be the victim of a serious crime

Medium - The risk posed is likely to place the child/young person in danger or they are a threat to themselves

Low - The apparent threat of danger to the child/young person is regarded as minimal.

A risk grading requires to be undertaken on every day of absence without explanation. This applies even where the young person is a frequent absentee. The risk grading should never be regarded as fixed and there must be regular reviews throughout the day to ensure that the initial risk grading is still appropriate. The level of risk will be identified by answering the following questions in relation to vulnerability, influences and past behaviour:

Vulnerability:

Is there an identified risk of suicide?

Is criminality suspected to be a factor? Is the child/young person vulnerable?

What are the effects of failure to take medication if it is unavailable to the child/young person?

Does the child/young person suffer from medical or mental health conditions, physical illnesses or disabilities?

Can the child/young person interact safely with others when finding themselves in unfamiliar circumstances?

Is there a known dependency on drugs, alcohol, medication or other substance either by the child/young person or by a close relative?

Is the child/young person on the Child Protection Register? Do the current weather conditions present an additional risk?

Influences:

Are there family/relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?

Has the child/young person been witness to or subject to domestic abuse?

Is there an ongoing personal issue linked to any racial, homophobic, sexual, the local community or cultural issue?

Has the child/young person been witness to, subject to or been involved in a recent violent and/or hate crime?

Are there any known problems in school?

Past Behaviour (Behaviour which is out of character is often a strong indicator of risk):

Are the circumstances different from 'normal' or out of character?

Is there a known reason for the child/young person to be not attending school?

Has the child/young person been missing before? Where were they found and did they come to harm?

The answers to the above questions enables the Head Teacher to decide whether the absent pupil should be categorised as High, Medium or Low Risk within the timescale stated above.

This decision will inform the most appropriate course of action. The options of next steps are either to:

- continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the day;
- if child or young person has a sibling at another school, contact the other school to inform the risk assessment;
- contact the Social Work Children and Families Team (any of the 3 offices can be contacted:
Strathbrock Partnership Centre reception 01506 284440 (option 2)
Bathgate Social Work Centre 01506 284700
Livingston Social Work Centre 01506 282252
- call Police Scotland

To report a missing person, contact should be made to Police Scotland on 101. In an emergency, contact by means of the 999 system.

An overview of procedural expectations when managing Safe Arrivals – Dealing with Unexplained Absences is detailed in Appendix 5 – Safe Arrivals Flowchart

SELF-EVALUATION TASK 2

How do your systems currently support good attendance?

Use the details in the table below to evaluate your current systems to support attendance in your school and consider next steps.

Aspect of System	Key Activity	Next Steps
Tracking and Monitoring		
Analysis of Data		
Systems Triggers and Procedures		

5.3 Practice

Key messages which underpin effective practice in supporting attendance include:

- Adopting a 'long-term view' to attendance and engagement
- Align to values and culture
- Support for individuals and families
- Reflect the views of the young person
- Prioritises social and emotional support
- Builds connections with a key person(s) e.g. mentoring
- Flexibility in learning and teaching, environment and curriculum
- Individualised support and regularly reviewed

Our practice to improve attendance and engagement in West Lothian focuses on our children and young people having a sense of belonging, improved agency in their learning and opportunities for personalisation and choice.

5.3.1 Belonging

Children and young people need to have a sense of belonging and included in all aspects of school life. Building affiliation through nurture and inclusion is linked to improving attainment and

achievement. Every child and young person must have at least one key adult who knows them well who adopts a nurturing and mentoring approach. The key adult knows when a child or young person is well and also notices, importantly, when they are not there. Strong relationships with key adults is essential to build a sense of belonging and affiliation with the school and the community. Opportunities to participate in leadership experiences and decision-making groups along with break time clubs and before and after-school experiences also help to build this ethos

5.3.2 Agency

Building learner agency and developing a culture of learning from mistakes also enables learners to feel included, connected and affiliated to the school community. Learners are encouraged to think about their learning and their next steps to improve and are able to state with confidence what their next steps are in learning. Feedback on learning focuses on effort and how to progress and modelling and scaffolding are used to support independent learning.

5.3.3 Personalisation and Choice

For learners to experience personalisation within their learning, it is essential that they are known well and that their learning is recognised and valued, including where feasible their learning beyond the classroom. Wherever learning is taking place, the day-to-day interactions between staff and learners are vital for personalised learning.

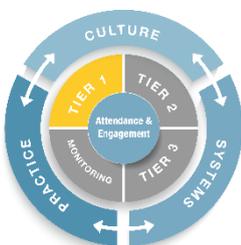
Further guidance on personalisation can be found on the Curriculum for Excellence Briefing Paper 5: [cfe-briefing-5.pdf \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

5.3.4 Early intervention and core strategies (Tiered Response)



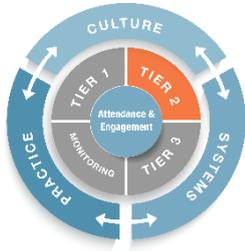
Monitoring

- Attendance between 95% and 100%
 - Recognition
- Attendance level between 90% and 95%
 - Monitoring absence levels
 - Recognition as appropriate



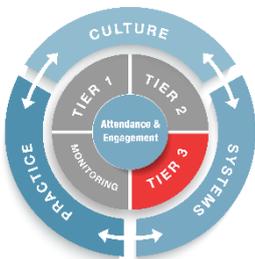
TIER 1

- Attendance drops below 90% for the first time
 - GroupCall Issued (set text) and Parental Letter A1
 - Phone call to parents
 - Early intervention is key at this stage
- Attendance level consistently between 80-90% over a term
 - Targeted school-based intervention and support
 - GroupCall Issued (set text) and Parental Letter A2
 - Targeted approaches based on wellbeing needs
 - Arrange parental meeting
- Attendance level improves from <70% to >80%
 - GroupCall to highlight improvement (set text)
 - Recognition of improvement
 - Continue to monitor and mentor
 - Update Assessment of Wellbeing/Child's Plan/IEP/Pupil Passport



TIER 2

- Attendance drops below 80% for the first time
 - GroupCall Issued (set text) and Parental Letter A3
 - Arrange parental meeting or home visit
 - Consultation with ISS (Social Policy and Education Teams)
- Attendance level consistently between 50-80%
 - Monitoring and Targeted mentoring and support
 - Monthly GroupCall Update and Parental Letter A4
 - Targeted approaches based on wellbeing needs
 - Consultation and engagement with ISS – consideration of referral to ISS for direct support (may be discussed at WRG)
 - Assessment of Wellbeing (opened, reviewed and monitored) and consideration of Child’s Plan (opened, reviewed and monitored)
- Attendance level improves from <50% to >70%
 - GroupCall to highlight improvement
 - Recognition of improvement
 - Continue to monitor and mentor
 - Update Assessment of Wellbeing/Child’s Plan/IEP/Pupil Passport as required



TIER 3

- Attendance drops below 50% for the first time
 - GroupCall Issued (set text)
 - Arrange parental meeting or home visit
 - Monitoring and Targeted mentoring and support
 - Weekly GroupCall Update
 - Targeted approaches based on wellbeing needs
 - Consultation and engagement with ISS – referral to ISS for direct support (may be discussed at WRG)
 - Child Planning Meetings are held on a regular basis to update and review the assessment of wellbeing and Child’s Plan
 - Refer to AAG when there has not been positive progress during the Child’s Planning Meeting process to give consideration to next steps including SCRA referral – Parental Letter A5
 - Advice and guidance available from SCRA West Lothian Office – 0131 244 3130
- Attendance level improves from <50% to >60%
 - GroupCall to highlight improvement
 - Recognition of improvement
 - Continue to monitor and mentor and targeted supports
 - Update Assessment of Wellbeing/Child’s Plan/IEP/Pupil Passport as required

5.3.5 Exceptional Circumstances

It is expected that, where the level of absence or disengagement is highly concerning, the Headteacher, or their representative, will, in discussion with the Inclusion and Support Service (ISS), move through each of the Tiers until a level of intervention is reached which has an appropriate impact on the attendance of the child/young person. The appropriate template letters should be used.

If attendance improved to over 90% and subsequently deteriorated again, it would be at the Headteacher's discretion not to return to Tier 1 but to resume at whatever stage of the process is deemed appropriate in liaison with the ISS.

5.3.6 Transition to Another School and Holiday Periods

Transition to another school or holiday periods should not prevent moving to the next Tier of the West Lothian Approach. Schools should not default to the Monitoring Tier after the summer holiday periods or moving school if attendance issues persist.

5.3.7 Taking a Child out of School During the Normal School Day/Early Departures

Parents will be encouraged to make non-school appointments, where possible, outwith the normal school day.

Parents who have to take a child out of school for an appointment should, where possible, notify the school in advance. If a parent wishes the child to be released into the care of another adult then the parent must notify the school that this is the case. The school must appropriately log all such notifications.

Where the child is being collected, the parent / authorised adult will be required to sign the child out, indicating when the child will return.

The same basic process applies to children who have to be taken out of school during the school day because they are unwell.

5.3.8 Absence Management Procedures for Pre-School Provision

Safe Arrivals: Dealing with Unexplained Absence for Nursery Classes, Nursery Schools and Early Years Centres

On the first day of absence an initial risk assessment must be carried out to determine whether a reason for non-attendance needs to be sought and/or further action is required. The following procedure must be adhered to:

- when a pupil has been recorded as absent, and no prior notification has been given of the absence by the parents, the nursery/EYC must risk assess whether an attempt to contact the parent is required. This risk assessment must take place no later than 45 minutes into the session on the first day of absence and should be informed by the Risk Assessment questions below
- parents will be responsible for providing and updating emergency contact information and for providing and updating contact telephone numbers. Parents will be responsible for responding promptly to contacts from the nursery/EYC;
- where a parent/emergency contact is informed of the unexplained absence of a child from nursery/EYC and acknowledges the notification from the nursery/EYC, the parent/emergency contact will be responsible for taking appropriate action in conjunction with the nursery/EYC.

Where it has been deemed appropriate to make contact with the parents and no contact can be made, further risk assessment should take place to inform the most appropriate course of action. The options of next steps are either to:

- continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the session;
- where a child is known to have an allocated worker from Social Policy, inform the appropriate Social Policy team of the absence. The Social Policy team will then have the responsibility of contacting the family and establishing the whereabouts of the child. In the event of the allocated worker being unavailable, their line manager or the Duty Manager will progress the matter;
- call the relevant Health Visitor for that area who may be able to share further information which informs decision-making; or
- call Police Scotland. Police Scotland would expect to be notified at the earliest opportunity with regards to a missing child following on from the Safe Arrivals procedure as outlined above. Schools should in all cases, not hesitate to make
- immediate contact with the police if additional factors/information giving cause for suspicion or concern becomes available. To report a missing person, contact should be made to Police Scotland on 101. In an emergency, contact by means of the 999 system.

An overview of procedural expectations when managing Safe Arrivals – Dealing with Unexplained Absences is detailed in Appendix 5 – Safe Arrivals Flowchart

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR FIRST DAY OF ABSENCE

The following process should be adhered to in order to establish the category of risk for the child. There are 3 grades of risk:

High - The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child is in danger through their own vulnerability or may be the victim of a serious crime

Medium - The risk posed is likely to place the child in danger or they are a threat to themselves

Low - The apparent threat of danger to the child is regarded as minimal.

A risk grading requires to be undertaken on every occasion of first day absence without explanation. This applies even where the child is a frequent absentee. The risk grading should never be regarded as fixed and there must be regular reviews throughout the day to ensure that the initial risk grading is still appropriate.

The level of risk will be identified by answering the following questions in relation to the child's and/or the family's vulnerability, influences and past behaviour. It is recognised that the answers to the following questions may be more applicable to the parent:

Vulnerability:

Is there an identified risk of suicide?

Is criminality suspected to be a factor? Is the child vulnerable?

What are the effects of failure to take medication if it is unavailable to the child?

Does the child suffer from medical or mental health conditions, physical illnesses or disabilities?

Can the child interact safely with others when finding themselves in unfamiliar circumstances?

Is there a known dependency on drugs, alcohol, medication or other substance either by the child or by a close relative?

Is the child on the Child Protection Register?

Do the current weather conditions present an additional risk?

Influences:

Are there family/relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?

Has the child been witness to or subject to domestic abuse?

Is there an ongoing personal issue linked to racial, homophobic, sexual, the local community or any cultural issue?

*Has the child been witness to, subject to or been involved in a recent violent and/or hate crime?
Are there any known problems in school?*

Past Behaviour (Behaviour which is out of character is often a strong indicator of risk):

Are the circumstances different from 'normal' or out of character? Is there a known reason for the child to be not attending school?

Has the child been missing before? Where were they found and did they come to harm?

The answers to the above questions enables the Head Teacher to decide whether the absent pupil should be categorised as High, Medium or Low Risk within the timescale stated above and which actions to follow.

5.3.9 Procedures for regular non-attendance at pre-school

If a child does not attend pre-school regularly or is absent for more than two weeks without agreement from the pre-school establishment, the place may be withdrawn.

Before a place is withdrawn, the professionals involved with the child/family should decide whether this is an appropriate action taking account of the impact on the child of removing the place.

West Lothian Council operates a two-tier intervention approach to managing the absence of children in pre-school provision. These tiers dovetail with Education Services' Continuum of Support and, as such, a wellbeing concern will have been raised in relation to attendance prior to Tier 1. Attendance falling below 90% triggers significant concern. The non-attendance of nursery children at pre-school provision should follow tiers of intervention as follows:

Tier 1

Where a pupil's attendance has fallen below 90%, a letter should be sent to raise the awareness of the parent to the level of absence and the impact it is having on the pupil's progress at school/nursery. Attendance Letter A1 should be used for this purpose.

(Exceptions to this would be where attendance has dropped below 90% only as a result of the exceptional circumstances of an authorised parental holiday or as a result of an exclusion or where it is likely that a medical condition or domestic circumstance, known to the school, will regularly and repeatedly impact on a pupil's attendance or is sufficiently significant and complex to warrant discretion.)

Tier 2

If in the next 4-week period, the pupil's attendance is still below 90% and there remains a concern about the level of attendance and/or the reason provided for the absence, a letter should be sent to parents inviting them to attend a meeting with the school key persons (Attendance Letter A8).

This meeting should be supportive and should be solution focused. A plan should be agreed to improve attendance. A request for service may be made to Community Child Health by the school if/when medical issues are cited as reasons for repeated or prolonged absence without the school's prior knowledge of a medical condition serious enough to warrant such absence.

SELF-EVALUATION TASK 3

How does practice in your school currently support good attendance?

Use the details in the table below to evaluate your current practice to support attendance in your school and consider next steps.

Aspect of Practice	Key Activity	Next Steps
Belonging		
Agency		
Personalisation and Choice		
Early Intervention and Core Strategies		

The following challenge questions may be helpful when consulting with children and young people in further developing school systems, culture and practice around attendance and engagement:

1. What makes you get out of bed and head into school each day?
2. What would help you if you have been struggling to make it into school?
3. Who are the key people who help you to attend school/learning? How do they support you to attend each day?
4. What are you hoping to do when you leave school? How can school help you achieve these ambitions?

5.4 Attendance Recording

All schools are required to keep an attendance register of every pupil (The Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975). This information constitutes the certificate of attendance presented to the Authority Attendance Group (AAG) and subsequent court proceedings or the Reporter to the Children's Panel where it may be considered as evidence for compulsory measures of supervision or other action.

A pupil should normally be regarded as absent from school when he or she is not in attendance for a period greater than half of the morning or afternoon session. Recording of absence should take place at least twice each day in primary school and period by period in secondary school to enable an accurate record of attendance to be kept. Codes for use when recording attendance/absence and lateness can be accessed direct from SEEMiS.

In line with Scottish Government guidance, for the purposes of national reporting, every absence is categorised as either authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised Absence

School staff are best placed to decide the school's most appropriate response to requests for absence to be authorised. Schools may authorise absence when they are satisfied by the reason provided, usually by the parent (via a note, email or phone call), self-certified or sometimes may be provided by another service provider. Reasons for authorised absence can include:

- illness where no learning provision is made (including ongoing mental health concerns);
- medical and dental appointments to be recorded in separate category;
- meetings prior to, and during court appearances and other legal processes;
- attendance at, or in connection with, a Children's Hearing or Care Review, or appointment

- with another service provider, e.g. social worker;
- religious observance;
- bereavement;
- weddings or funerals of close friends and family;
- arranged absence in relation to children in Gypsy/Traveller families;
- participation in non-school debates, sports, musical or drama activities agreed by the school;
- lack of transport – including due to bad weather;
- family recovery from exceptional domestic circumstances or trauma;
- period of exclusion to be recorded in a separate category;
- extended leave with parental consent including some young carer activities.

Schools may authorise absence where families are experiencing exceptional domestic circumstances or traumatic events such as family bereavement. However, authorising absence should not delay the process of considering how the school and other partners can plan to support the child or young person and family, helping to minimise longer term absence. For children and young people who are care experienced, the authorisation of absence for exceptional domestic circumstances should be considered carefully with multi-agency partners to consider whether absence from school is in fact beneficial. The school and partners should ensure that appropriate supports are in place and the relevant actions from The West Lothian Approach are followed.

Unauthorised Absence

Schools should record absence as unauthorised when they perceive that there is no valid reason for the absence provided. Such absence can be categorised as:

- absence with parental awareness in specific circumstances;
- family holidays during term time;
- occasional absence without parental awareness;
- longer term absence – school related issues;
- longer term absence – home and wider community;
- absence relating to substance and alcohol misuse.

There are two categories outwith authorised or unauthorised:

- Temporary exclusion and
- extended leave with parental consent.

Schools should be able to evidence all meetings and interventions relating to attendance and late coming. Copies of all relevant notes, minutes, correspondence and referrals relating to time-keeping and non-attendance should be retained.

Further clarification on the following attendance/absence reasons are in Appendix 2:

- (a) Extended leave with parental consent
- (b) Attendance
- (c) Late during the first half or second half of the opening
- (d) Work experience/work placements
- (e) Sickness with educational provision
- (f) Sickness with no education provision
- (g) Family holidays authorised by school
- (h) Exceptional Domestic Circumstances
- (i) Other authorised absence
- (j) Medical and dental
- (k) Family holidays not authorised by school

- (l) Truancy including unexplained absence
- (m) Other unauthorised absence
- (n) Temporary exclusion

5.4.1 Home Education

Home Education is when parents choose to formally withdraw their child from the school roll to be educated entirely at home or in a place or places other than school, possibly using a tutor or online learning sourced by the parent. It is not the role of the school to recommend Home Education, it is a parental decision. Home Education requires to be processed through the procedures within the Home Education Policy.

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/29567/Home-Education-Policy/pdf/Home_Education_Policy_June_2016.pdf?m=636776227649800000

Please Note - School register/Codes to be used: Not applicable – Pupil no longer on school roll

5.4.2 Flexi Education

Flexi-schooling is where a request is submitted to withdraw a child part-time from school e.g. for the child to attend school only on certain days, or for certain subjects. The feasibility of each parental flexi-schooling request is considered on its own merit. Schools should not recommend Flexi-Schooling as an alternative to full time education. Flexi-schooling should be a parental choice, and one which requires to be processed through the procedures within the Home Education Policy.

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/29567/Home-Education-Policy/pdf/Home_Education_Policy_June_2016.pdf?m=636776227649800000

Please Note - School register/Codes to be used: Other Attendance Out of School (OAT).

5.4.3 Part-time Timetables

Scottish Government guidance (Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2, 2017) states that, “In order to support the child or young person appropriately and enhance the transition back to school, it may be necessary in exceptional circumstances to implement a package of support that could be achieved using a flexible or part-time timetable with an agreed timescales as to when this will end. Any such arrangements should be for a short, agreed period with the aims and conditions around this recorded in any support plan.”

Part-time timetables are based on a formalised agreement between the school and the parent, where clear reasons are evident that it would be in the best interest of the young person to attend school on a part-time basis. Individual cases require to be considered in relation to the Positive Relationships Policy and schools must ensure that when pupils are not expected to attend the school full-time there is a clear agreement with parents about who is carrying out that duty of safeguarding the pupil at each session.

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/2141/Exclusion-Policy/pdf/Promoting_Positive_Relationships_in_West_Lothian_Educational_Establishments.pdf

Please Note - School Register/ Codes to be used:

- PTX (L): Exclusion related part time timetable is accessing home learning materials at other times, due to behaviour related concerns
- PTH (Y): Health related part time timetable).

5.4.4 Temporary Exclusion

Exclusions are imposed by the school or by the authority and therefore there is a requirement to record and report these separately from other types of absence. Recording of attendance and absence should cease when a pupil is removed from the register of the school.

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/2141/Exclusion-Policy/pdf/Promoting_Positive_Relationships_in_West_Lothian_Educational_Establishments.pdf

5.4.5 Attendance/Offsite provision as part of a learning programme

Each school must ensure that it has in place robust procedures for maintaining accurate attendance information for pupils attending alternative or offsite provision as part of a learning programme. It is not sufficient to record OAT (other attendance out of school) and assume that the pupil has attended as arranged

5.4.6 Reducing late-coming

Late-coming can significantly impact on attainment and achievement and can result in pupils missing out on the welcoming and informative start to a new working day. Poor timekeeping is disruptive to the individual pupil and to the learning of the class and may be an early warning of other difficulties.

Late-coming is defined as arriving in school after the start of the school day.

A pupil who arrives after the bell at the start of the school day but before the declared midpoint of a morning or of an afternoon should be recorded as 'J' irrespective of the reason for the late-coming.

A pupil arriving after the declared mid-point is to be recorded using the code letter 'K'.

Each school should identify its declared midpoint by reference to a morning or afternoon interval or the beginning or end of a teaching period which occurs around the middle of the morning or afternoon.

Where a pupil's late-coming continues to be a concern despite contact with parents, the school should consider the need for an Assessment of Wellbeing and subsequent action plan to meet the pupil's identified need. This process should be followed in line with the council's Continuum of Support.

5.5 Operational Procedures for the Authority Attendance Group (AAG)

West Lothian Council recognises the need for all children and young people to engage fully in the education process and has developed an approach for promoting attendance through positive and supportive interventions based on the implementation of Education Services' Continuum of Support in collaboration with our multi-agency partners. This is a framework that promotes early intervention and a positive partnership with parents through a staged intervention approach. As part of the Continuum of Support, schools have the opportunity to proceed with a referral to the Authority Attendance Group (AAG).

The AAG is set up under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to facilitate West Lothian Council's statutory duties in terms of pupils in schools.

The overall duty of the AAG is to advise on the statutory responsibilities relating to attendance.

This entails a meeting with parents who are not carrying out the responsibilities assigned to them in terms of the legislation in relation to attendance at school.

The AAG is conducted in a formal manner, with the emphasis being on advice and encouragement to resolve the problem. The principal aim is to return the child to full-time education.

5.5.1 Membership of the AAG

The membership of the AAG is composed of:

- a Chairperson who is one of the Council's Heads of Service (Social Policy or Education Services). The Heads of Service may delegate this role to a senior officer within their service;
- two members drawn from a pool of senior officers from within Education Services and Social Policy.

Education Services carries out the administration involved in the operation of the AAG. The quorum of the AAG is two members.

5.5.2 Personnel in Attendance

The persons who should be present at a meeting of the AAG are not specified by law, but West Lothian Council specifies certain conditions and these are:

- the parent named in the notice, although it is competent for business to proceed if a parent does not respond to a notice requiring them to appear at a hearing;
- the pupil in question may also be present if the AAG feels that this is necessary (usually P4 and above);
- the Chairperson may sanction the attendance at a meeting of an appropriate person other than the members, officers, parents and child, e.g. a relative, friend, Social Worker, to support but not to replace the parents; the referrer or a representative of the referrer.

5.5.3 Referral Process and Administration of AAG

Referral to the AAG is made by the Headteacher, after consultation with relevant staff and appropriate communication with parent.

Documentation submitted for a referral to the AAG should be in line with the "Getting It Right For Every Child" (GIRFEC) framework, ie. Assessment of Wellbeing and child planning documentation.

The parent will be served notice requiring him/her to appear, in accordance with the notice, before the AAG and explain the reason for the absence of the pupil from school. The notice will be given not less than 7 days and not more than 14 days before the hearing. The parent has the option to submit written information rather than appearing at the meeting.

If the parent fails to satisfy the AAG that he/she has a reasonable excuse in relation to the pupil's failure to attend school, the AAG may make the appropriate determination as to the disposal of the case.

5.5.4 Conducting the Meeting

In conducting the meeting, the following should be observed:

- all meetings must be held in private;
- venues for the meeting should be carefully considered in order to effect a positive outcome;
- meetings will be fixed and called, agenda arranged, minutes prepared, reports obtained and subsequent action taken by the Depute Chief Executive or delegated officer;
- agendas will be maintained as confidential documents, available only to members of the AAG;
- reports on the proceedings will be restricted to a statistical account together with a general description of the disposal of the case considered;
- all papers given out must be returned at the end of the meeting;
- if the AAG decides to interview a pupil, it must do so in the presence of the parent and with the parent's permission.
- When the parent has been invited into the meeting, they should be asked to confirm that they are the parent or guardian of the pupil concerned. The date of birth of the child should be checked;
- the Chairperson should then endeavor to establish whether reasonable excuse for non-attendance exists. The other members of the AAG may, through the Chairperson, ask such questions as they feel are relevant to the proper disposal of the case. The Chairperson should allow the referrer to have the opportunity of putting questions to the parent;
- The parent and the referrer should be asked to withdraw while the AAG reaches a conclusion on the disposal of the case;
- the AAG's determination will be intimated to the parent at the meeting at the discretion of the AAG and will, in any event, be given in writing, following the meeting;
- should the disposal of the case involve a referral to either the Reporter for the Children's Panel and/or Community Child Health, all paperwork related to the case will be forwarded to the Reporter for the Children's Panel and/or Community Child Health as appropriate.

5.5.5 Possible disposals by the AAG

The AAG can determine the following disposals:

- continue the case up to a maximum of 6 school weeks for a specified purpose which may be to monitor attendance or request additional information or reports;
- refer pupils for a statutory medical examination;
- make an attendance order;
- refer to the Procurator Fiscal or take the case to the Sheriff Court for prosecution
- refer the pupil to the SCRA for the Children's Panel
- desert the case

5.5.6 Re-referral to the AAG

If the attendance or punctuality of a pupil becomes unacceptable after having been deserted by the AAG, schools, in consultation with ISS (Social Policy), may decide it is appropriate to 'fast-track' the case back to the AAG.

APPENDIX 1 TIERED RESPONSE – CORRESPONDENCE DOCUMENTATION

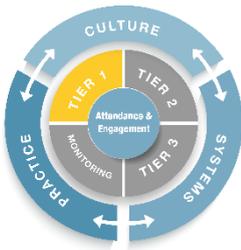
MONITORING



Monitoring

- Attendance between 95% and 100%
 - Recognition
- Attendance level between 90% and 95%
 - Monitoring absence levels
 - Recognition as appropriate

TIER 1



TIER 1

- Attendance drops below 90% for the first time
 - GroupCall Issued (set text) and Parental Letter A1
 - Phone call to parents
 - Early intervention is key at this stage
- Attendance level consistently between 80-90% over a term
 - Targeted school-based intervention and support
 - GroupCall Issued (set text) and Parental Letter A2
 - Targeted approaches based on wellbeing needs
 - Arrange parental meeting
- Attendance level improves from <70% to >80%
 - GroupCall to highlight improvement (set text)
 - Recognition of improvement
 - Continue to monitor and mentor
 - Update Assessment of Wellbeing/Child's Plan/IEP/Pupil Passport

ATTENDANCE DROPS BELOW 90% FOR THE FIRST TIME:

Issue GroupCall with the following message:

“Your child’s attendance has fallen below 90%. Please help us ensure they have the best possible start in life through maintaining high levels of attendance at school”

In addition, issue Letter Template A1:

Letter A1 – Less Than 90% Attendance - TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of Parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

West Lothian Council is committed to working in partnership with parents, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all pupils benefit from an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential at school, in further education or employment.

School staff have a responsibility to monitor and record absence, communicate effectively with pupils and their families to promote good attendance and time keeping. In line with West Lothian Council Attendance in School Policy. I am required to draw your attention to **(PUPIL'S NAME)**'s attendance as it has recently fallen below 90%. Whilst you may have notified the school that **(PUPIL'S NAME)** would be absent, it is my responsibility to impress upon you the importance of school attendance on wellbeing, achievement and attainment and highlight our concerns of the potential impact of sustained non-attendance.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and supporting **(PUPIL'S NAME)**'s education. Please do not hesitate to contact (school named contact) if you wish to discuss matters further.

Thank you for your support

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Next step:

ATTENDANCE LEVEL CONSISTENTLY BETWEEN 80-90% OVER A TERM:

Issue GroupCall with the following message

“Unfortunately, your child’s attendance at school remains a concern. Please contact the school to enable us to set up a meeting to positively support high levels of attendance.”

In addition, issue Letter Template A2:

Letter A2 – Continued Absence - TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to my previous letter in which your attention was drawn to **(PUPIL NAME)**'s level of attendance. I have to report to you that **(PUPIL NAME)**'s attendance remains a concern.

West Lothian Council is committed to working in partnership with parents, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all pupils benefit from an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential at school, in further education or employment. I would therefore invite you to a meeting to discuss **(PUPIL NAME)**'S absence and agree strategies to help support **(PUPIL NAME)** achieve an improved level of attendance.

This meeting will be held on _____ (day / date) at _____ (time).

If you are unable to attend, please call the school to reschedule. We can also schedule these meetings on a virtual platform and can send you the join details for this if required.

I look forward to meeting with you and thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

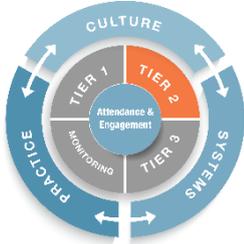
Next step:

ATTENDANCE LEVEL IMPROVES FROM <70% TO >80%

Issue GroupCall with the following message

“Your child’s attendance at school has improved in recent weeks. Thank you for your continued support and we will continue to work with you to positively support high levels of attendance.”

TIER 2



TIER 2

- Attendance drops below 80% for the first time
 - GroupCall Issued (set text) and Parental Letter A3
 - Arrange parental meeting or home visit
 - Consultation with ISS (Social Policy and Education Teams)
- Attendance level consistently between 50-80%
 - Monitoring and Targeted mentoring and support
 - Monthly GroupCall Update and Parental Letter A4
 - Targeted approaches based on wellbeing needs
 - Consultation and engagement with ISS – consideration of referral to ISS for direct support (may be discussed at WRG)
 - Assessment of Wellbeing (opened, reviewed and monitored) and consideration of Child's Plan (opened, reviewed and monitored)
- Attendance level improves from <50% to >70%
 - GroupCall to highlight improvement
 - Recognition of improvement
 - Continue to monitor and mentor
 - Update Assessment of Wellbeing/Child's Plan/IEP/Pupil Passport as required

ATTENDANCE DROPS BELOW 80% FOR THE FIRST TIME:

Issue GroupCall with the following message

“Unfortunately, your child’s attendance at school remains a concern. Please contact the school to enable us to set up a meeting to positively support high levels of attendance.”

In addition, issue Letter Template A3:

Letter A3 – No Improvement -TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to our previous meeting in relation to **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s absences and the effect on their education.

Unfortunately **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s level of absence remains a significant concern and I write to inform you that, in accordance with council policy, a request for service will now be made to the Inclusion Support Service (ISS) to become involved. Part of the remit of ISS is to support West Lothian Council in improving attendance at school. Alternatively, if Social Policy are already working with the family, improved school attendance will now also become part of the agreed outcomes / actions within the child's plan.

West Lothian Council is committed to working in partnership with parents/, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all pupils benefit from an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential at school, in further education or employment.

I now, therefore, remind you of your parental obligations under the Education (Scotland) Act which states:

“Every parent of a child of school-age has a duty to ensure that the child receives education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability.”

This duty is fulfilled by the parent by ensuring that the child attends school regularly. The Education Authority has a legal responsibility to enforce school attendance and can prosecute parents whose children fail to attend school.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Next step:

ATTENDANCE LEVEL CONSISTENTLY BETWEEN 50-80%

Issue GroupCall with the following message

“Unfortunately, your child’s attendance at school remains a significant concern. Please contact the school to enable us to set up a meeting to positively support high levels of attendance.”

In addition, issue Letter Template A4:

Letter A4 – AoWB/CPM - TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to our previous communications regarding **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s level of attendance and can confirm that there has been no significant improvement.

In accordance with council policy, I am now obliged to move to the next stage of the Attendance at School Policy. This stage involves a planning meeting with you, school representatives, your allocated Social Policy worker and any other appropriate professionals working with the family, whose presence would be beneficial to improvements being made to **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s attendance.

This meeting will be held on _____ (Day / Date) _____ (Time).
If you are unable to attend, please call the school to reschedule.

In line with council policy, failure to inform the school that you cannot attend will result in a referral being made to Authority Attendance Group (AAG). The AAG is set up under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to facilitate West Lothian Council's statutory duties in terms of pupils in schools.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Letter A5 – AAG - TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to our meeting in relation to **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s absences and the effect on their education.

Unfortunately **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s level of absence remains a significant concern and I write to inform you that, in accordance with council policy, a referral will now be made to the Authority Attendance Group (AAG). This is a statutory body which has provision to make the following decisions:

- To continue the case for up to a maximum of 6 weeks for a specified purpose which may be to monitor attendance or request additional information or reports.
- To desert the case.
- To refer **(CHILD'S NAME)** for medical examination.
- To make an Attendance Order.
- To refer to the Reporter to the Children's Panel
- To refer to the Procurator Fiscal so that prosecution may be considered.

I now, therefore, remind you of your parental obligations under the Education (Scotland) Act which states:

"Every parent of a child of school-age has a duty to ensure that the child receives education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability."

This duty is fulfilled by the parent by ensuring that the child attends school regularly. The Education Authority has a legal responsibility to enforce school attendance and can prosecute parents whose children fail to attend school.

You will be contacted in due course informing you of the time/date/venue of the AAG hearing. Meantime, it is imperative that **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s attendance at school improves.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

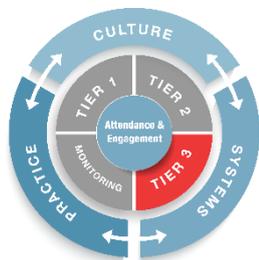
Next step:

ATTENDANCE LEVEL IMPROVES FROM <50% TO >70%:

Issue GroupCall with the following message

"Your child's attendance at school has improved in recent weeks. Thank you for your continued support and we will continue to work with you to positively support high levels of attendance."

TIER 3



TIER 3

- Attendance drops below 50% for the first time
 - GroupCall Issued (set text)
 - Arrange parental meeting or home visit
 - Monitoring and Targeted mentoring and support
 - Weekly GroupCall Update
 - Targeted approaches based on wellbeing needs
 - Consultation and engagement with ISS – referral to ISS for direct support (may be discussed at WRG)
 - Child Planning Meetings are held on a regular basis to update and review the assessment of wellbeing and Child's Plan
 - Refer to AAG when there has not been positive progress during the Child's Planning Meeting process to give consideration to next steps including SCRA referral – Parental Letter A5
 - Advice and guidance available from SCRA West Lothian Office – 0131 244 3130
- Attendance level improves from <50% to >60%
 - GroupCall to highlight improvement
 - Recognition of improvement
 - Continue to monitor and mentor and targeted supports
 - Update Assessment of Wellbeing/Child's Plan/IEP/Pupil Passport as required

ATTENDANCE DROPS BELOW 50% FOR THE FIRST TIME:

Issue GroupCall with the following message

“Unfortunately, your child’s attendance at school remains a significant concern. Please contact the school to enable us to set up a meeting to positively support high levels of attendance.”

ATTENDANCE LEVEL IMPROVES FROM <50% TO >60%:

Issue GroupCall with the following message

“Your child’s attendance at school has improved in recent weeks. Thank you for your continued support and we will continue to work with you to positively support high levels of attendance.”

Letter A6 – PAPER – Holiday Request – Unauthorised - TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

Thank you for your application for leave of absence for **(CHILD'S NAME)** to go on holiday during term time.

I write to confirm that, in accordance with council policy, permission for leave of absence for **(CHILD'S NAME)** is not granted. As a result, any absences on these days will be recorded as unauthorised.

It should be noted that for family holidays there is no requirement for schools to provide class work or homework to be undertaken by pupils.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Letter A7 –Holiday Request – Authorised But Still To Be Marked Absent - TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

Thank you for your application for leave of absence for **(CHILD'S NAME)** to go on holiday during term time.

Under the circumstances, I am willing to authorise absence. However, please be aware that **(CHILD'S NAME)** will still be marked absent for this period and this will impact on his/her overall attendance figure.

It should be noted that for family holidays there is no requirement for schools to provide class work or homework to be undertaken by pupils.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Letter A8 – Absence Reason Unauthorised - TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I have to inform you that the reason supplied for **(CHILD'S NAME)'s** recent absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Letter A9 – Unexplained Absences - TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

It is the responsibility of parents, if a pupil is absent, to inform the school by telephone of the reason or to supply a written note of explanation when the pupil returns to school.

(CHILD'S NAME) has unexplained absences for the date(s) _____

Please contact the school to update the reasons for these absences.

Please complete the reply slip below and return it to the school as soon as possible. In this way, **(CHILD'S NAME)'s** record of attendance can be updated accordingly. Alternatively, if you find it easier, please contact me on the telephone number above.

Should you fail to respond, in line with council policy, **(CHILD'S NAME)'s** absence will be recorded as "Truancy or Unexplained" and further investigation will take place.

Thank you for your support

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

.....

(CHILD'S NAME) was absent on _____ for the following reason:

Signed: _____

Parent of (CHILD'S NAME)

Date: _____

APPENDIX 2 SEEMiS Coding Information A

Attendance/Absence Reason	Notes on completion	Authorised/ Unauthorised absence
Extended leave with parental consent	<p>Extended leave with parental consent is not to be considered the same as a family holiday.</p> <p>Extended leave with parental consent should be recorded separately outside the figures for attendance and absence, and includes circumstances such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school • short-term parental placement abroad • family returning to its country of origin (to care for relative, or for cultural reasons) 	
Attendance	<p>Attendance includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at school • Learning outwith the school provided by a college or other learning provider while still on the roll of the school • Educational visits, day and residential visits to outdoor centres • Interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events • Debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with the school • Study leave for pupils participating in national exams, if arranged by the school during the period of the national examination timetable. • Receiving tuition via hospital or outreach services. 	Attendance
Late during the first half or second half of the opening	<p>Where a child or young person has arrived late but during the first half of the opening, this will be marked as late. This is regardless of whether the lateness is for a valid reason.</p> <p>Where a child or young person has arrived late but during the second half of the opening, then this will be marked as Late. This recording is regardless of whether the lateness is for a valid reason. For schools using period-by-period registration, any registration in periods beginning in the second half of the opening, without any registration in periods beginning in the first half of the opening, will be converted to an overall L2 code for the opening (even if a later period is subsequently missed).</p>	Authorised
Work	Work experience/placements includes:	

experience/work placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work experience/placements arranged or agreed by the school • Volunteering arranged or agreed by the school 	
Sickness with educational provision	<p>This may include time spent on sick leave or maternity leave, with parental confirmation or medical certificate, and where adequate educational provision has been made. Guidance on Education of Children Absent from school through Ill-health.</p> <p>https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/6846</p>	
Sickness with no education provision	<p>This would include any time where a pupil is off sick, with parental confirmation or medical certificate, and section 14 of Education (Scotland) Act 1980 is not applicable. See Guidance on Education of Children Absent from school through Ill-health.</p> <p>https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/6846</p>	
Family holidays authorised by school	<p>Under exceptional circumstances schools can authorise a family holiday during term time.</p> <p>Such circumstances may include exceptional domestic circumstances, where a parent's employment is of a nature where school holiday leave cannot be accommodated (e.g. armed services, emergency services, professions where parents are required to work away from the family for prolonged periods of time).</p> <p>A family holiday classified under the "authorised absence" category should not include reasons such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The availability of cheap holidays • The availability of desired accommodation • Poor weather experienced during school holidays • Holidays which overlap the beginning or end of term • Parental difficulty in obtaining leave 	
Exceptional Domestic Circumstances	<p>Authorised</p> <p>This relates to short-term exceptional domestic circumstances. Absences related to short-term exceptional domestic circumstances can be classified as either authorised or unauthorised absence.</p>	Authorised

	<p>Authorised absence under this heading covers situations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the period immediately after an accident or illness • a period of serious or critical illness of a close relative • a domestic crisis which causes serious disruption to the family home, causing temporary relocation <p>Unauthorised Under section 14 of the 1980 Act, education authorities must make special arrangements to ensure young people with care responsibilities do not miss out on their entitlement to an education. If a pupil is unable to attend school due to care responsibilities, there is an expectation that additional support services will be assessed to support the pupil, and their absence from education will not be long-term and therefore categorised as authorised absence. However, where additional services have not been accessed by the pupil and care responsibilities become long term, the absence should be categorized as unauthorised absence.</p>	Unauthorised
Other authorised absence	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate family weddings • Bereavements • Religious observances • Attendance at court • Attendance at childcare review • Attendance at children’s hearing • Lack of transport – including due to bad weather • Sporting & cultural events not arranged by the school, but approved by them. 	Authorised
Medical and dental	<p>Attendance at medical and dental appointments. For those recording period by period, any opening that contains at least 1 session of attendance will be converted to ‘attendance’ for statistical purposes. For schools with one registration per opening, a medical and dental recording should be recorded as ‘attendance’ if the child or young person attends for any part of the opening, for statistical purposes. It is assumed that the school will note the fact that the child or young person was not in attendance for the full opening, for legal purposes.</p>	Authorised

Family holidays not authorised by school	<p>Family holidays should not be recorded as authorised absence, other than in exceptional circumstances, where a parent's employment is of a nature where school-holiday leave cannot be accommodated.</p> <p>A family holiday classified under the "authorised absence" category should not include reasons such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The availability of cheap holidays • The availability of desired accommodation • Poor weather experienced during school holidays • Holidays which overlap the beginning or end of term • Parental difficulty in obtaining leave 	Unauthorised
Truancy including unexplained absence	Include all absence for which no adequate explanation has been provided.	Unauthorised
Other unauthorised absence	Include any other reasons for unauthorised absence: e.g. where a parent is refusing to send their child to school following a dispute with school.	Unauthorised
Temporary exclusion	<p>Include all pupils excluded from school. Where a decision has been taken to remove a pupil from the register following an exclusion, the school is not expected to continue to mark the pupil as absent.</p> <p>For further clarification please refer to the ScotXed Advice Note SXD04/2006 – "Accurate recording of absence of pupils who are excluded from school for a period of time on a 'temporary' basis."</p>	

APPENDIX 2 SEEMiS Coding Information B

Full Code	SEEMiS Description	ScotXed Description	Attendance or absence?
EXL	Extended leave with parental consent	Extended leave with parental consent including some young carer activities	NA - Subtracted from possible openings
---	Present	Attendance	Attendance
FLD	Field Trip		
MIS	Missing		
OAT	Other attendance out of school		
PER	Medical or Dental Appointment		
SCH	In school but not in class		
STY	Study Leave		
VIS	School Visit		
LAT	Late (arrives before mid-opening)	Late 1: Arrives before 50% of opening	Attendance
WRK	Work Experience	Work experience	
SEP	Sickness with educational provision	Sickness with educational provision	
COB	Sickness with provision to home learn - Coronavirus with home learning	COVID-19 sickness with home learning	
COA	Attendance – Self Isolation – Coronavirus with home learning	COVID-19 self-isolation with home learning	Authorised Absence
MED	Medically Certified	Sickness with no educational provision	
NIM	Notifiable Illness (Medically Certified)		
NIS	Notifiable Illness (Self Certified)		
SEL	Self Certified		
LT2	Late (arrives after mid-opening)	Late 2: Arrives after 50% of opening	
PHL	Authorised Parental Holiday	Family holidays authorised by school	
DCA	Exceptional domestic circ. (authorised)	Exceptional domestic circumstances (authorised)	
ABS	Other Authorised Absence	Other authorised absence	
PTX	Part Time Timetable (exclusion related)	Part-time timetable (exclusion related)	
PTH	Part Time Timetable (health related)	Part-time timetable (health related)	
CAB	Sickness unable to home learn - Coronavirus without home learning	COVID-19 sickness without home learning	Unauthorised absence
CAA	Authorised absence – Self Isolation – Coronavirus without home learning	COVID-19 self-isolation without home learning	
UPH	Parental Holiday	Family holidays not authorised by school	Unauthorised absence
TBC	To be Confirmed	Truancy, including unexplained absence	
UNA	Truancy or Unexplained Absence		

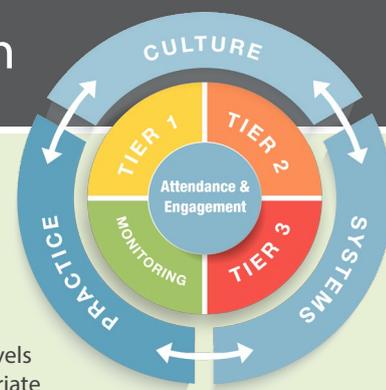
UNK	Unresolved Attendance Inputs		
DCU	Exceptional domestic circumstances	Exceptional domestic circumstances (unauthorised)	
OUA	Other unauthorised absence	Other unauthorised absence	
CPI	Parents isolating child against advice – Coronavirus		
EXC	Exclusion	Temporary exclusion	Temporary Exclusion
COH	Home Learning - Attendance	Home Learning - Attendance	Home learning - attendance
CAH	Home Learning - Absence (Any Reported)	Home learning - Absence (Any Reported)	Home learning - absence
CLO	Closed (e.g. election)	Not sent to ScotXed	
HOL	Holiday		
INS	In-Service		
NIX	Should Not Attend (Notifiable Illness)		
SNA	Should Not Attend		

APPENDIX 3: ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT TIERED RESPONSE FLOWCART

APPENDIX 4: SAFE ARRIVALS ACTION FLOWCHART

APPENDIX 5: PARENTAL INFORMATION LEAFLET – Attendance Matters

Attendance and Engagement | West Lothian



Monitoring Tier

Attendance level between 95% and 100%

- Recognition

Attendance level between 90% and 95%

- Monitoring absence levels
- Recognition as appropriate

Tier 1

Attendance drops below 90% for the first time

- GroupCall issued (set text) and Parental Letter A1
- Phone call to parents
- Early intervention is key at this stage

Attendance level consistently between 80-90%

- Targeted school-based intervention and support
- GroupCall issued (set text) and Parental Letter A2
- Targeted approaches based on wellbeing needs
- Arrange parental meeting

Attendance level improves from <70% to >80%

- GroupCall to highlight improvement (set text)
- Recognition of improvement
- Continue to monitor and mentor
- Update Assessment of Wellbeing/Child's Plan/IEP/ Pupil Passport

Tier 2

Attendance drops below 80% for the first time

- GroupCall issued (set text) and Parental Letter A3
- Arrange parental meeting or home visit
- Consultation with ISS (Social Policy and Education Teams)

Attendance level consistently between 50-80%

- Monitoring and targeted mentoring and support
- Monthly GroupCall update and Parental Letter A4
- Targeted approaches based on wellbeing needs
- Consultation and engagement with ISS – consideration of referral to ISS for direct support (may be discussed at WRG)
- Assessment of Wellbeing (opened, reviewed and monitored) and consideration of Child's Plan (opened, reviewed and monitored)

Attendance level improves from <50% to >70%

- GroupCall to highlight improvement
- Recognition of improvement
- Continue to monitor and mentor
- Update Assessment of Wellbeing/Child's Plan/IEP/Pupil Passport as required

Tier 3

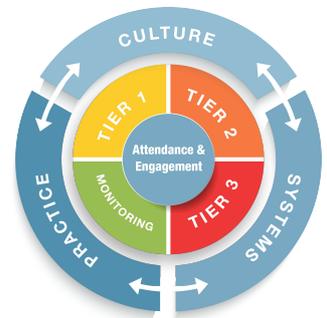
Attendance drops below 50% for the first time

- GroupCall issued (set text)
- Arrange parental meeting or home visit
- Monitoring and targeted mentoring and support
- Weekly GroupCall update
- Targeted approaches based on wellbeing needs
- Consultation and engagement with ISS – referral to ISS for direct support (may be discussed at WRG)
- Child planning meetings are held on a regular basis to update and review the Assessment of Wellbeing and Child's Plan
- Refer to AAG when there has not been positive progress during the Child's Planning Meeting process to give consideration to next steps including SCRA referral - Parental Letter A5
- Advice and guidance available from SCRA West Lothian Office - 0131 244 3130

Attendance level improves from <50% to >60%

- GroupCall to highlight improvement
- Recognition of improvement
- Continue to monitor and mentor and targeted supports
- Update Assessment of Wellbeing/Child's Plan/IEP/Pupil Passport as required

Safe Arrival Flow Chart



School aware of a child's absence with no prior notification from Parent/Carer

Group Call Sent by school

School continue to attempt to make contact with Parent/Carer to establish reason for absence. Contact should be established by 9.45 in Primary and ASN Schools and 10am in Secondary schools

No response to Group Call or Emergency Contact Numbers, Head Teacher conducts a Risk Assessment

1st day of Absence AND deemed at Risk

NOT 1st day of Absence OR no perceived Risk

Contact Safe Arrival Desk emailing safearrivals@westlothian.gov.uk Available 10am – 1pm

Monitor situation and discuss By with AIMS Worker if necessary

Safe Arrival Duty Worker given Child's Details, All Emergency contact No's, Current % Attendance and Risk Factors

SWIFT Checked. If there is an Allocated Social Policy worker, School informed to contact the Allocated worker

Contact made by phone and Child's Whereabouts established. Parent told to inform the school and advised of Safe Arrival Policy

No Contact made, Home Visit undertaken

School advised of Phone Contact with Parent/carers

Contact Established at Home Visit, School Advised

No Contact at Home Visit. School advised to contact Police if still concerned about the Child's safety

Head Teacher contacts Police to notify them of missing child
(*Safe Arrival Duty Worker Actions in Italics*)

Attendance Matters!

Is your child missing out?

Why is school attendance so important?

Excellent attendance at school is important to allow your child to have the best possible start in life.

Below are just some of the key reasons why it is so important children attend school:

- To learn
- To have fun and make new friends
- To understand responsibility
- To experience new things in life
- To develop awareness of other cultures, religions, and gender difference
- To achieve
- To gain qualifications
- To develop new skills
- To build confidence and self-esteem
- To grow as individuals

If your child has **90%** attendance they will have the equivalent of:

½ a day off per week,
19 days off per year

247 days off over their school career of 13 academic years, equivalent to over **1 year of lost education.**

Every school day counts

Attendance percentages can be misleading. Consider the following:

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Gives your child the best chance of success and gets them off to a flying start.
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Less chance of success. Makes it harder to progress.
85% Attendance	27 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed Almost half a term missed	Serious implications on learning and progress.
80% Attendance	36 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed Half a term missed	
75% Attendance	45 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed Almost 1 whole term missed	

Is it ever alright for my child to be off school?

Your child can be off school if:

- They are ill
- They are attending a doctor or hospital appointment
- They are going to a meeting about a Children's Hearing or court, or if they are going to a Children's Hearing, case review or court
- If they are involved in an activity and the school agrees in advance
- Someone close to your child has died
- There is a crisis or serious difficulty at home or in your family
- They are going to a religious ceremony or a wedding of someone very close to them
- You are a Gypsy/Traveller family and while you go travelling you keep in touch with your child's teacher
- Your family is returning to a country of origin for cultural reasons or to care for a relative.

As long as you have informed the school of the reason why your child is off, and the school is satisfied that this is a valid reason, these would be called authorised absences.

Source: 'A guide for parents about school attendance' Smarter Scotland Scottish Government.

Children and young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, under-achieve in examinations and/or become involved in anti-social behaviour.

What can you do to help?

- Be aware of the impact of regular absences – missing school is missing out.
- Take family holidays outside term time.
- Try to arrange non-urgent dental and medical appointments outside school hours.
- Establish a good routine in the mornings and evenings so your child is prepared for the school day ahead; build-up good habits of punctuality and attendance.
- Be involved with your child's education and school – ask questions.
- Inform the school if your child is absent due to illness or other reason.
- Discuss any problems or difficulties with the school, staff are there to help and will be supportive.



Research show that children who regularly miss more than 2 weeks of school throughout their primary years tend to under-perform in their 4th year exams.

If attendance falls to 90%, a child is likely to be missing 1 out of every 10 words that are spoken by a teacher.

What if my child is anxious or worried about going to school?

- Your child has a right to an education and to be safe and happy at school. But sometimes children and young people can be anxious or worried about going to school due to many possible reasons.
- You may feel letting your child stay off school is an effective option, but unfortunately, this will not help find a solution. It's important to talk to the school if this kind of problem arises.
- Your first point of contact should be the school. However there are also a number of agencies and services that can provide you with professional help and advice. (Contact details can be found below).

What is an unauthorised absence from school?

An unauthorised absence is when your child is absent from school and there has been no valid reason given as to why.

For example:

- When a parent feels there is a satisfactory reason why their child should not attend school e.g. to take part in a family related activity
- Family holidays during term time
- Absence relating to substance and alcohol misuse
- Absences related to issues in school e.g.
 - Struggling with learning or specific lessons
 - Conflict with, or fear of a teacher or peers
 - Bullying
 - Issues relating to social media
- Anxiety about school
- Anxiety/mental health issues
- Unhappy with course choices
- Unhappy with the school's attempts to provide support
- Insensitive sharing of personal details
- Challenging family circumstances
- Coping with adversity and trauma
- Experience of care
- Experience of abuse or neglect

Support, information and advice

ParentLine Scotland

ParentLine Scotland is the free, confidential, telephone helpline for anyone caring for a child in Scotland. You can call about any problem, however big or small. Phone: 0808 800 2222 www.children1st.org.uk/parentline-scotland

Parentzone

Parentzone provides information for parents and cares about how you can support your child's education. On line at: www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone

Citizen Advice Bureau

Your local CAB can provide information and support about rights and responsibilities when it comes to schools and education. Information and advice on lots of areas at: www.adviceguide.org.uk where you can also find your local CAB.

Childline

Children and young people can get confidential help about any question, concern or worry. Phone: 08001111 www.childline.org.uk

Enquire

Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning and operates a helpline for parents, carers and practitioners. An interpreter can be arranged upon request. Phone: 0845 123 2303
E-mail: info@enquire.org.uk www.enquire.org.uk

National Parent Forum of Scotland

Provides parents with information and advice on understanding the new curriculum and supporting their child's education. www.parentforumscotland.org